

CONVERSATION IN A GRAVEYARD

—Gunnar D. Kumlien

THE

Commonweal

THE COMMON GOOD

Bishop John J. Wright



NEW MEN, NEW TIMES

John C. Cort



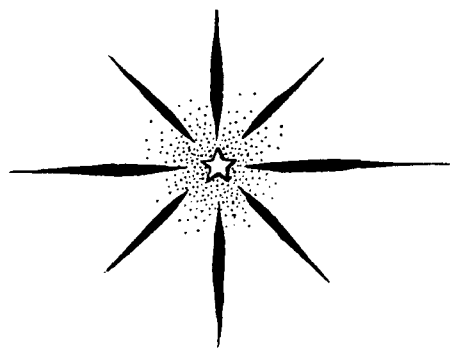
CHRISTMAS: A POEM

Thomas Merton

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*L*et us go over to Bethlehem,
and see this thing
that has come to pass, which the
Lord has made known to us.
St. Luke 2:15



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THE Commonweal

week by week

THE WORLD AT CHRISTMAS

*Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings
of great joy that shall be to all the people.*

THE TEMPTATION to despair of the world is a real one. Sometimes the cruelty and anguish that are reflected in the daily papers seems so great that it is as if Christ had never been born.

In Brooklyn, for example, newspaper reporters wrote about a mother, father and five children who had been spending their nights trying to sleep in an old car. No housing was available, no landlord wanted to take in so many children. With due allowance for local variations, this story is repeated at regular intervals all over the country.

In the United Nations, the futility of further efforts to rescue twenty-eight thousand Greek children was finally recognized. Kidnapped during the civil war by Communist guerrillas, the children were taken to countries behind the Iron Curtain. There they will be reared and indoctrinated by the state, perhaps to serve as useful tools for later conquest of their homeland. All efforts to restore the children to their families have met with failure.

In the South, an aged Negro minister was set upon, beaten severely, then kicked when he was down. His crime consisted in sitting in the white section of a bus rather than in the area reserved for Negroes. Everyone watched the attack, he reported later from a hospital bed, but no one lifted a hand to help him.

At the same time, lawyers argued before the Supreme Court about segregation. Too bad, said those who upheld it, but feeling between the races is real. Nineteen hundred years after Christ's birth, they would not want to answer for the consequences if segregation were eliminated.

In how many countries, to how many parents did children born this year bring sorrow, not joy? Sorrow, because the child meant one more mouth to feed when there was already too little food, and one more body where there was already too little room.

In India, the effects of last summer's killing fa-

mine were still hard-felt. Babies died easily, and old people slipped quietly away in their sleep. Most of them had never had the Gospel preached to them.

In cities all over the country, the homeless and unwanted of Skid Row shuffled to the nearest line for free soup and stale bread. On Thanksgiving and Christmas they get turkey dinners; the rest of the year they are the nation's forgotten men.

In China, priests died in prison, and the faithful were under pressure to testify falsely against their former shepherds. Many died for the Faith, but the yoke of Herod is a cruel one.

BEHIND the Iron Curtain, millions are deprived of freedom, stripped of dignity. In most of the satellite countries the churches are closed, the priests imprisoned, the flocks scattered.

In South Africa, the bitterness of years of racial repression is reaching a climax. The segregation laws have always been strict; now the *Afrikaners* are trying to make them even more so. In the process, they have loosed a whirlwind, and where it will stop no man can say.

In Korea, two great military forces face each other, bloody but still strong. Around them the earth has been laid waste, and no matter what the outcome of the war, it will be many years before the prostrate land can recover. Meanwhile in the prison camps on each side thousands of captives languish, waiting for the settlement that does not come, while over the whole world hangs the menace of the Bomb.

In the countries of Western Europe, the poor clamor for land, for hope, for a chance to breathe. If Europe is ever to recover and a lasting peace to be achieved, it is essential that millions emigrate. But in the United States, the tightened restrictions of the McCarran bill go into effect at Christmastime, and the small flow from abroad will be still further cut down. The inn is large and blessed by God with abundance, but the caretakers can find little room for those outside the gates.

So it goes, in country after country all over the

world. It would be easy to despair, to give in to the temptation to withdraw from the cruelties of day-to-day life. Yet that impulse must be faced for what it is—a temptation.

For we know that history has never been the same since the Incarnation. No matter how harsh the headlines, no matter how cruel the daily record, the world can never again be what it was before Bethlehem. For the Angel spoke truly to the shepherds, and it is upon his words that all our trust must depend:

Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the City of David.

PROTESTANTS ON SECULARISM

UNFRIENDLY critics of the American public school—and of the fact that religion is so often conspicuous by its absence from auditorium and classroom—tend to forget the large part believing Protestants had in its establishment. The school system has changed with the times. But there were other factors that hastened the dropping of religion from the picture. There were the persistent efforts of certain highly placed educators of a rampantly secularist persuasion. But of greater importance still was the determination of educational authorities to avoid all hurt to religious sensibilities. Protestantism was breaking up into more and more denominations, agnosticism growing and the number of viewpoints represented in a single locality multiplying rapidly.

The formula under which many public schools now operate is to leave religion out of the curriculum

and the course of the day's activities altogether for fear of giving offense. So that in fact, without any necessarily deliberate attempt to do so, the American public school has come to take its place among the major forces that give a secularist direction to our national life.

It is therefore heartening that the message sent out from the second general meeting of the National Council of Churches sought to come to grips with the problem. The Council favors no watertight separation of Church and State but declares that the two actually come together in their "reverent awareness of God" and their "recognition of absolute moral values." It is properly opposed to a preferential status for any religious body in this country.

The Council recognizes the present danger of our culture's "becoming pagan." It differentiates between religious neutrality, which is proper for our public schools, and the philosophy of secularism.

Most striking of all is the following: "We cannot, moreover, admit the proposition that in a public system of education the state shall have the unchallenged right to monopolize all the hours during which a boy or girl receives instruction five days a week." The Council is firmly for released-time religious instruction, on the school premises or near by, within the pupil's regular working day.

Formal education, of course, is but one of the channels for secularism. American mass media are generally impregnated with its spirit. The motivation in our advertisements, the Hollywood version of the American way of life and the glorification of material success seem even more insidious.

That is why the emphasis of the National Council of Churches in this matter is so heartening at this time. For under present conditions secularism cannot be overcome without the concerted effort of all religious believers.

NEXT WEEK

DOUGLAS HYDE writes a tribute to Ludwig Freund, one of the Slansky group executed at Prague in the recent anti-Semitic purge.

"We used to pull his leg because, in his anxiety to look as un-foreign as possible, he had made himself look more English than the English. He dressed in the roughest of rough tweeds and wore caps to match, of the sort that he had seen in those illustrated 'glossies' which specialize in showing the petty-bourgeoisie how the rich really live. But he took the leg-pulling with a smile, for he was the easiest of men to get on with. Moreover, he was, in dressing like that, only taking the Party's orders very seriously—as he always did."

NEW STEEL PLANT

LESS than two years since it began churning up the spinach fields across the Delaware River from Trenton, N. J., the United States Steel Corporation has formally opened its new Fairless works at Morrisville, Pa. At a cost greater than that of digging the Panama Canal, construction crews have transformed six square miles of placid countryside. With all its plants, US Steel will account for thirty-one per cent of the nation's steel output; these new facilities alone, producing nearly two million ingot-tons annually, will have a steel capacity comparable to that of Sweden. In view of such elements as the complete workers' communities that have been laid out in the vicinity of the new furnaces and the steel

company's tie-in with the rich iron-ore deposits along the Orinoco River in Venezuela, the Fairless plant entails a whole new range of corporation responsibilities. It may be regarded as a giant symbol of the increased responsibilities American business is assuming after January 20.

THE GENERAL'S RETURN

THE whole nation, indeed, the whole free world, felt a real anxiety in President-elect Eisenhower's journey to Korea. Now, in his safe return, the sense of relief is universal too. But in many cases it is a relief felt for more than even the safe return. Added to this conventional sentiment is gratitude both for what the General has said and what he has not said since embarking on his mission.

This abundant thanksgiving is probably more widespread among those who opposed the General in the late election than among his original supporters. For it is the gratitude of those who rejoice that in the General's cautious but courageous pronouncements since the election, the "real Eisenhower," so effectively obscured during the campaign, has begun to emerge.

The major fear of many who have supported the Truman Administration's Korean policy, and the recurrent nightmare of America's allies, has been that under a Republican Administration the more ardent Asia-firsters would have their day.

These men have, seemingly, never been able to comprehend the agonizingly complex nature of our Korean intervention, or, if able to comprehend it, they have seemed unable to approve the ends we have set ourselves to accomplish there. They have insisted, simply, that "in war there is no substitute for victory," and acting on this major premise, they have, with ruthless logic, sought to make the Korean venture total, a war to annihilate the forces of Mao-Tse Tung or a crusade to restore the power of Chiang Kai-shek. For resisting this logic, for insisting that this was a war unique in history's annals, one which, because of its limited and complex objectives, defied the slogans of ordinary warfare, the Administration has been called cowardly and defeatist.

General Eisenhower did little to repudiate the hazardous logic of Republican orthodoxy during his campaign. Indeed, he seemed at times to have been at least partially captured by it. The fears of those who have supported the Administration's "limited war" policy, and the worries of America's allies, were consequently intensified. When, for example, Governor Stevenson, in a plea for patience in bearing the terrible Korean burden, warned that we "cannot hurry history," the General mocked him for

flippancy. When he warned that there were no easy answers to the problem, that the ultimate answer must wait upon the Kremlin's world designs, the General scorned him for defeatism.

The General's own campaign "answer," that he would go to Korea to seek a possible way out, consequently left the implication, and, for many, the fear, that the "way out" might prove to be some version of the MacArthur doctrine, with its grave risks of an historic jump from the frying pan of Korea into the fire of a third world war. And, to those who feared, courageous as such a jump might be, the world seemed too great a price to pay for it.

Now, returned, the General has chosen his words carefully. What we can surmise of his intentions regarding our future course in Korea is necessarily nebulous, but by negative criteria we can guess that it will not be any rule-of-thumb "way out," that the war will not be recklessly extended, that history will not be greatly "hurried." The agony, and the hope, will continue, but they will be borne and felt with renewed patience and determination not to yield.

NEW YORK RADIO

AMERICANS are usually proud of the number of radios in their country, but not all of them are proud of the programs usually available. The world-traveled, who have spent some time in England and come under the influence of the BBC, particularly of the famous "Third Program," sometimes return home to find the banalities of American commercial broadcasting too much to bear and, casting aside their old radio receivers, take comfort in the collection of a good record library.

Such fugitives from the more obvious afflictions of our civilization are seldom found in New York City, however. Here the municipally operated station WNYC has for many years provided a level of musical and educational broadcasting matched nowhere else in the nation. It has been justly famous as one of New York City's major contributions to American cultural life, one at least equal in importance to its museums and libraries, and one which is a model of what intelligent radio can be.

Now, in an "economy" move, the comptroller of New York City, Mr. Lazarus Joseph, has proposed abolishing WNYC in an effort to save some three hundred thousand dollars a year. It is difficult to imagine a more shortsighted move, or one more calculated to set back the cause of educational, public-service broadcasting in the United States. The loss of WNYC would be a serious blow to the whole level of American radio, for it is a station in which all literate Americans can take pride.

EVERY CHRISTMAS

THEY have set up the big tree in Rockefeller plaza; the skinny street-corner Santa Clauses are out again and above the low mournful sounds of New York traffic their little silver bells are as insistent as *Sanctus* warnings; the big stores on Fifth Avenue are gaily festooned and buzzing with shoppers — Christmas is here again. At Mass the choir sings *Rorate coeli desuper* — liturgically, another year has passed and Christ is about to be born again. It seems not the time to write of events but of the Event.

How many sermons have been preached about Christmas, how many books and articles and meditations written — and yet to each, Christmas must mean something a little different. The memory, the faith and devotion and understandings of all the other Christmases come rushing back to mind when the signs of the holy season appear.

It is said that the celebration of Christmas is becoming ever more secularized, and this is sadly true. But how can one who has ever considered the Event go through the season dumbly? For a Catholic the memories of a lifetime rise to the surface. One cannot be a Catholic and not know faith, in himself and others, and it is the faith that the Child was born and the world was redeemed which gives Christmas its meaning. Even to those who say Christmas is a myth, it is the possibility of it, the fact that millions upon millions of men have believed it, which gives the feast its ultimate meaning. Voltaire is supposed to have said that if God did not exist He would have had to be invented. But who could have invented Christmas?

Halfway through life (a matter of statistics) you look back upon the Christmases you have known, and each one is a little different from the other. The Event remains changeless. You change though, and you either learn more of what Christmas means—which is growth—or the meaning of it begins to escape you—which, I take it, is retrogression. The child understands Christmas as a child; the Trappist monk understands it as a man. It is better to be a man, unless you have lost the clarity of childhood — and then it may be better if you had never heard of Christmas because you have moved away, not towards, the changeless Event.

As a little kid you learn that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, that there were Wise Men and shepherds and angels in the stable with the Child, His Mother and St. Joseph and that a wonderful thing happened. You may not understand why the Child was born, because you know nothing of sin (that comes with the dark wisdom of maturity) but you know that what happened was a thing of won-

der, of beauty and of love—and that is enough for faith. That is enough for a child's Christmas.

I remember third grade and a certain Sister Sara. We were all boys in that class, and yet the Sister wanted a Christmas play. Some of us were angels and a few were shepherds. There were Three Kings and a St. Joseph, and one kid named Emil was dressed in blue and white, to be the Blessed Virgin. I remember that he wore a first-communion veil over his head and a long blue robe. He must have been a holy sight. But so solemn was the occasion, so lively our faith, that no one openly jeered at him.

This was the cast. The rest of us were "extras." First we were the townsfolk of Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph went from desk to desk, pleading for room, and our role was to turn them away until finally they reached one Peter's desk. He was the kindly inn-keeper who offered room in his stable. You can imagine the zest with which we played the hard-hearted townsfolk of Bethlehem. In the third grade villains are far more meaningful than heroes. I still remember the thin, piping voices: "Go way, go way from here!"

Then, when the weary trudge from desk to desk was finished, the Mother and St. Joseph disappeared from sight—this was the way Sister Sara planned it—and the angry townsfolk became an angelic choir. "Winds through the olive trees softly did blow, round little Bethlehem, long, long ago." The class sang with devotion and the Sister — childlike herself — pumped the little hand-organ, playing a wheezy accompaniment. Then, the makeshift curtain was raised for the classical tableau. We all sang another angelic chorus: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will!"

This was crude, perhaps, rude — but it was Sister Sara's way, and I have never forgotten it. The Sister perhaps did not know much about advanced methods of education, but there is the record: it happened many years ago, and whenever it is Christmas I think of the "play," as we called it, the year Emil with the blue robe over his corduroy trousers and high-laced shoes was the Mother and still nobody laughed.

That was the Christmas when the real story first made a deep impression. Before that it had been Santa Claus (or pretending to believe in Santa Claus so the folks would not be disappointed) and the presents under the tree, and a hazy idea of what was being celebrated. But the year Emil was the Blessed Mother, the Event itself came into clear focus, and ever since though I should lose my faith a thousand times over, when Christmas is celebrated, I will still have to lose it again. You can't escape Christmas; you can only escape yourself.

JOHN COGLEY.

The Common Good

THE "THIRD GOOD" MAY YET RALLY "LIBERALS" AND "CONSERVATIVES"
IN A SINGLE UNITED EFFORT TO SERVE THE GENERAL WELFARE.

✠JOHN J. WRIGHT

MORAL and legal philosophies at the moment tend to polarize around one or the other of two seemingly contrary, and sometimes conflicting, goods: the good of the individual and the good of the collectivity. Those who are preoccupied with the primacy of individual good tend to take their stand or find themselves accounted with the parties of the Right in our era of State Socialism. Those who tend toward the collective good, and consequently give place of primacy to the rights of the State, turn up in our day in the ranks of the Left.

Unfortunately the social philosophies to the Left and those to the Right have polarized at their extremes, with a consequent bitter antagonism between those in both camps who might normally be moderate. This antagonism is reflected in the spirit of suspicion with which men approach those who disagree with them, however slightly, on social legislation. It is reflected also in the intemperate name-calling by which men of "conservative" instinct or judgment increasingly find themselves dismissed as fascists or reactionaries, while those of more "liberal" impulse or vision find themselves decried as if they were revolutionaries or anarchists.

Even more disastrous is the manner in which extremists on every side become symbols and spokesmen of the camps with which they are identified, even when they are neither typical nor worthy representatives of these camps but, more often than not, unwelcome nuisances to their own side of Center.

Unfortunate, too, is the resultant "guilt by association," among sincere political "conservatives" and honest social "liberals" who find themselves cut off from equally honorable and sincere citizens in the opposite political or social camp because of the sharply

polarized divisions of contemporary opinion. This paralyzing sense of guilt is intensified, to the great hurt of all concerned, by the embarrassment these same good men find in the intellectual and moral company they must keep on their own side as a result of this same polarized condition of political thought. And so, high-minded "liberals" are too often associated with actual or potential traitors; while great-hearted "conservatives" are frequently distressed to find themselves tarred with the same stick as bigots, misanthropes and the hard-of-heart generally.

What to do? The time-tested philosophy of Christendom, blending the hope of Hebrew prophecy, the wisdom of Greek speculation, the sanity of Roman Law and the charity of Christian Revelation, had a phrase which provides the saving word. That philosophy spoke of a third good, with richly personal elements, yet truly public in its nature. That third good, conciliating and unifying, is more humane than the

mere good of the State; it is more generous than the mere good of the individual. It is what the scholastic philosophers of Christendom and the founding fathers of America called the "common good."

DEVOTION to the "common good" may yet rally in a single cooperative effort generous "conservatives" and thoughtful "liberals." That which constitutes the "common good" of political society, Jacques Maritain reminds us, is not only the collection of public commodities and services—the roads, ports, schools, etc., which the organization of common life presupposes; it is not merely a sound fiscal condition of the state and its military power; it includes also the body of just laws, good customs and wise institutions which provide the nation with its structure; the heritage of its great historical remembrances, its symbols and

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glories, its living traditions and cultural treasures. The "common good" includes all of these and something more besides—something more profound, more concrete and more human. It includes, above all, the whole sum of these; a sum which is quite different from a simple collection of juxtaposed units. Even in the mathematical order, as Aristotle pointed out, 6 is not the same as 3 plus 3. A victorious army is immeasurably more than the mere physical total of the strength or even the valor of the individuals who compose it. A symphony orchestra is made up of so many players plus the director, but the whole, in this case, is much more than the mere sum of its parts.

The "common good" so conceived is not only a collection of advantages and utilities; it is strongly moral and ethical in its content. It includes elements of rectitude and honor, of morality and justice. Only on condition that it embrace these is the "common good" truly such: the good of a people living in a community, the good of an organized human city, rather than the booty of a pack of thieves or common hoard of a mob of gangsters.

For this reason, perfidy, the scorn of treaties and of sworn oaths, political assassination and unjust war, even though they may be useful or advantageous and, in this sense, "practical" goods, actually contribute to the destruction of the true "common good."

Here again M. Maritain is our guide: the "common good" is always ethically good. Included in it, as an essential element, is the maximum possible development, here and now, of the persons making up the united multitude, to the end of forming a people organized not by force alone but by justice. Historical conditions and the still inferior development of human society make difficult the full achievement of the ends of social life. But the end to which it tends is to procure the common good of the multitude in such a way that the individual as a person gains the greatest possible measure, compatible with the good of the whole. The economic guarantees of labor and capital, political rights, the moral virtues and the culture of the mind, all contribute, through the "common good," to the realization of this individual independence.

THE "common good" includes, we have seen, the cultural, historical and spiritual heritage shared by the group, as opposed to the heritage particular to any individuals within the group. It is difficult to analyze the elements of this heritage. But every now and again someone speaks out above the general din of dissident voices and utters ideals common to all, words expressive of our heritage of "common good."

Abraham Lincoln was a Republican; he lived in a specific period of American history; he presents strongly individualistic traits; he was a partisan of the Northern

cause in the War between the States; it is difficult sometimes to appreciate that millions of sincere Americans profoundly disliked some of his ideas, deplored many of his policies, distrusted him personally. But when he spoke at Gettysburg, he spoke for all Americans.

Woodrow Wilson was a Democrat. He, too, lived in a particular period of our national history and a specific phase of our emergence into the international community. He had marked individual traits, many of which his friends found amiable, others of which his critics found distasteful. Whole areas of his political philosophy were unacceptable to millions of his fellow citizens and some of his policies provoked the resentment of many. Yet in his public pronouncements he frequently transcended the inevitable limitations of himself, his times and his political context.

Who in this land does not feel the tug of a sentiment which is common to the hearts of us all when he reads the magnanimous phrasing of Wilson's declaration of war against the German Government and not the German people? Who is cold to the exalted address to the Military Academy at West Point, in which Wilson summarized so many of the elements of our "common good" and linked them, as the common good must always be linked, to the benign purposes of God and to the secrets of God's Providence?

"... America," Wilson said on that occasion, "came into existence for a particular reason. When you look about upon these beautiful hills and up this stately stream, and then let your imagination run over the whole body of this great country from which you youngsters are drawn, far and wide, you remember that while it had aboriginal inhabitants, while there were people living here, there was no civilization which we displaced. It was as if in the Providence of God a continent had been kept unused and waiting for a peaceful people who loved liberty and the rights of men more than they loved anything else, to come and set up an unselfish commonwealth. It is a very extraordinary thing. You are so familiar with American . . . history that it does not seem strange to you, but it is a very strange history nonetheless. There is none like it in the whole annals of mankind—of men gathering out of every civilized nation in the world on an unused continent and building up a polity exactly to suit themselves, not under the domination of any ruling dynasty or of the ambitions of any royal family; doing what they pleased with their own life on a free space of land which God had made rich with every resource which was necessary for the civilization they meant to build upon it."

So the "common good" is all the heritage from the past and all the hope for the future which good men share under God. Common to many, it is therefore *public*; perfective of the individual, it remains somehow *personal*. It calls the individual out of himself to

share things with the general community, but it puts the resources of the general community at the service of the things closest to the person of the individual. That is what Cicero meant when he defined the "common good," the *res publica*, in terms of a nation's altars and hearthsides, of the spiritual and domestic values which center about these and which serve personality: *in aris et fociis est res publica*.

Out of this concept of the "common good" our forefathers derived their notion of the great object of the State's existence. Hence their fine old phrase "the common weal," a phrase perpetuated in the name by which the civil community is designated in my home state, not by the cold, collective name so dear to the totalitarian, "The State," nor by any name suggesting special interest or partisan emphasis, as "the Duchy" or "the Realm"—but "The Commonwealth"—"The Commonwealth of Massachusetts."

THE "common good" is preserved and promoted by the nurse who braves the danger of personal infection in order to serve that good; by the scientist who forfeits individual convenience in order to increase it; by the parent who foregoes individual advantage in order to rear future citizens to enhance it; by the saint who renounces individual pleasure in order to sanctify it; by the soldier who disciplines individual preference in order to defend it; by the party or regime or even the national State which abdicates particular claims or narrow prerogatives in order to conciliate those who share it.

It was the good which was beloved by King St. Louis of France when he subordinated both the instincts of self and the claims of his State to a higher welfare shared with others. His counselors unanimously rebuked St. Louis for excessive generosity in giving to the English King land which the French had regained from British conquest. Louis did not concede the English claims and he could easily have vindicated his own by force, but still he freely yielded the land. He said: "My Lords, the land that I give him I give not because I am under obligation either to him or to his heirs, but so that there may be mutual love between my children and his. And it seems to me that I am making good use of what I give him, since it makes us join hands in common love who were before at odds."

The "common good" is the mutual bond of all who love the good, the true and the beautiful; who seek good things, not evil; who seek not only the private good of persons or the collective good of the State, but the good of both, in and under and through the Supreme Good, which is God. It is the good which God gives to us all in order to keep us together, as opposed to the good that He gives to us each to keep to ourselves. It is the good before which, on due occa-

sion, both individual and State are obliged to bow.

Out of a reaffirmation of the reality and claims of the "common good" there would come many results greatly to be desired. A quickened appreciation of the "common good" would turn the tide against the reckless setting of class against class, the irresponsible incitement of group against group. It would coordinate anew the interests and the efforts of labor *plus* management, tradesmen *plus* intellectuals, statesmen *plus* generals, as against the present so frequent pitting of good men against other good men in the conflicts of labor *versus* management, intellectuals *versus* tradesmen, statesmen *versus* generals within the same nation and presumably seeking the same good.

Such an appreciation of the "common good" which unites, as against—or, rather, as *above*—particular or factional or partisan goods which divide, would make possible the "Vital Center" for which certain political philosophers are pleading, a "Vital Center" which can exist only when honorable moderates of "Right" and "Left" prefer working with each other in behalf of the "common good" to working with extremists of their own respective camps, extremists who seek only the particular good after which their side aspires.

The conscientious citizen who walks a little left of center, freed from the embarrassment of constant association with senseless revolutionaries, should be able to make common cause in the quest for the common good with the no less honorable citizen who steers his course a little right of center and is too often condemned as the friend of soulless reaction.

A clearer concept of the reality and the rights of the "common good" may suggest a formula for planning a better international order, to conserve the values of the established nations, but also to be enriched by other, perhaps more basic and humane supra-national values, as little by little we come to appreciate how much of our heritage out of the past and our hopes for the future are shared within all nations.

Finally, a new emphasis on the nature of the "common good" will re-orient the minds of men toward other goods, higher goods which transcend mere private advantage or even temporal common weal. The longer men meditate on the nature and the notion of the "common good," the more surely will they come to understand that there is no true good so secular, so of the earth and earthly, but that it comes from God, has been hallowed by His Christ, and, by its consecrated use, can be a means to Heaven.

There is no "common good," no truly human heritage or valid hope of any people, which lies outside God's Providence, is not bound up with His purposes, is not somehow predestined, however natural it be in itself, to find its place in the supernatural order that God has revealed and through which all things created are finally brought back to Him.

Conversation in a Graveyard

ONE of the rear tires exploded with a noise like a shot, echoing loudly in the narrow silent valley. I stopped at the side of the road and got out the spare, only to discover that it too was flat. This added up to a somewhat unpleasant situation, but the day was splendid, and luckily I was in no hurry.

No settlements were to be seen, and traffic was scarce on this little by-road not far from Monte Cassino, scene of several fiercely fought battles during World War II. I had already passed several military cemeteries, German, Polish, British and American, and now I saw another one directly in front of me, its lines of white crosses extending in perfect rows along the barren mountain slope. Possibly I could get the caretaker to help me, I thought.

Then a stocky, tanned fellow in overalls came toward me; he was the caretaker all right, an Italian who spoke the lazy Neapolitan dialect, but unfortunately, he could not help me himself. Instead he advised me to stop the next car, even though it might be a long time before one came along. I offered him a cigarette and we sat on a rock at the side of the road to wait.

As many Italians do, he started to talk about himself, not out of conviction that his life would interest a stranger, but rather as a gesture of confidence. Perhaps he was lonely too. Visitors were getting scarce, he complained, because the dead heroes whose graves he tended were being gradually forgotten by relatives and friends.

The caretaker had been a soldier himself during the war, but had been "lucky." Taken prisoner by the British in Libya and then liberated during one of the Axis offensives, he had caught typhoid fever and been sent back to a military hospital in Italy. He got well only to be returned to duty with the Italian forces and captured by the Germans after the Italian armistice. Sent to Germany as a prisoner, he had escaped at the time of the German breakdown and had then walked and hitchhiked back to Italy. Home again, he had been unemployed until he found his present job.

"This whole valley is a cemetery," he said. "Wherever the farmers plough deep enough or dig to fill in bomb craters, they find human bones and skulls with helmets. Both Germans and Allies fought like devils here for months and months. In one place, whole German regiments were wiped out. Strange people, these

Germans. By that time they knew they were going to lose the war. Still they kept on fighting like that. . . . Why?"

He was shaking his head, seeming to be really sorry for the Germans and their lack of judgment. I could not resist asking him whether he would have fought like that had he been in their place.

The Italian stared at me, and I could see from his expression that he was not quite sure whether I was joking. Then he touched his forehead with his finger, whistled, and said: "It makes no sense. I have my old father, my brothers and my girl in Monte Cassino to care for. If I hadn't surrendered to the better armed British in Libya, instead of dying to defend a sand hill in the desert I don't give a damn for, who would have looked after them? And why, later on in the mess after the armistice, should I have let the Germans shoot me? I'm not crazy!"

"But how about your mother country?" I asked. "Isn't it every soldier's duty to obey orders and fight for his native land under any circumstances?"

"The mother country," he sneered. "The mother country—that's my family. Anything beyond is just rot and hogwash! I tell you: we've had enough of that stuff by now. Ask the crippled Italian soldiers what they think! When they want an increase in their lousy pensions, the police hound them. That's their reward from their mother country!"

I was impressed by the vehemence of his outburst and by its obvious sincerity. I said: "But when you were told to fight for democracy against the totalitarian German tyranny, didn't you think it was worth sacrificing life for such an ideal?"

He started to laugh.

"How could we believe that kind of propaganda," he said, "when we were supposed to fight one brand of dictatorship at the same time that we were allies with another? Or isn't Russia supposed to be a dictatorship? The new talk about 'democracy' sounded as silly as the Fascists' propaganda had. We Italians aren't perfect, but we aren't stupid either. The boys up there," (he pointed with his finger at the white crosses on the mountain slope), "believed what they were told. And what did they die for? For one dictatorship against the other. For propaganda. Some of them are buried like dogs at the roadside, forgotten already by their girls and their friends. Eight years isn't much. It won't be too long until even the names on the crosses will disappear. And believe me—they were fine boys anybody could be proud of. On both sides."

IN spite of the warm autumn sunshine I felt chilly. At first I had thought he was an active Communist because of the ease with which he expressed himself, but by this time it was obvious he was not. His words

reminded me of another war cemetery I had visited recently without having intended to. It was a German war cemetery of World War I near Belgrade, profaned and completely abandoned. But I could see that the battered inscriptions referred to heroes, dead for the fatherland. And were not these men now utterly forgotten? Who remembers why German soldiers fell in Serbia only thirty-five years ago?

The caretaker looked squarely at me, as if realizing he had been talking too much to a stranger, and wanted to know my nationality. When I told him, he asked me eagerly if Sweden had not kept out of the war. When I nodded, he seemed to be much impressed. "Imagine," he said thoughtfully, "a whole nation which stayed out of the war. . . . How did you manage it?"

He had the same attitude toward war as so many of his countrymen. Consciously or unconsciously they consider it a cataclysm—like an earthquake or a flood. The natural attitude of a man threatened by an earthquake or a flood is to try to suffer from it as little as possible. Too many war-like foreign nations have passed through this lovely Italy over the centuries, from North to South and from South to North, always leaving behind them tombs and dead heroes.



The attitude of the Italians on war does not mean that they are cowards, as the persistent prejudice of other countries would have it. They are not, and they are even capable of foolhardiness, of risking their lives without hesitation if there is a chance to save someone who is in danger. This is a much nobler form of courage than the physical courage of the attacking soldier "who believes what he is told." But the Italian cannot convince himself that a war, any war, is really worth fighting. He may be, as somebody has put it, "too intelligent to be a good soldier," or possibly he is just too skeptical.

We were still waiting, and no car had appeared. I offered my companion another cigarette and watched him while he lit it. If what Darwin says about the survival of the fittest is true, I thought, this caretaker is fitter for survival than the dead heroes up the hill, who may have despised him when they were alive.

"How about another war?" I asked him. "Do you believe there will be one?"

"Of course," he replied. "If you prepare a war, you will have it. It has always been that way, and there is no reason why it should be different this time."

"But isn't the issue more clear-cut this time?" I said. "Isn't it really democracy versus totalitarian tyranny without any unholy alliances? Wouldn't you admit, at

least, that some wars were predominantly just and some predominantly unjust?" I was becoming aroused, feeling there was something immoral in his attitude.

"How can I tell?" he said. "I have not even been through elementary school, but I know that wise men are unable to agree whether wars are just or unjust—even afterwards. In life, one side is seldom completely right and the other all wrong. It's usually about fifty-fifty, with one side right in certain matters and the other side right in others. The talk that this Western World, with all its corruption and misery, stands for Christian civilization is just rot and propaganda all over again. I don't believe a word of it. Look at our stinking slums and our rich people with their bejeweled prostitutes and the government that calls itself Christian!"

"And on the other side," he went on, "the talk that the Communists are in favor of peace and progress, in spite of their armaments and their terrorizing of poor people—that's all rot and propaganda too. That's why the boys in the new Italian Army have even less understanding for the Atlantic Pact and all that than they had for Mussolini's so-called Steel Pact with Hitler. And that's why I'm not going to be fooled by any form of propaganda when the next war breaks out. I'm going to do exactly as my father did during the big earthquake in Sicily: get hold of my family and try to save it."

He stopped, listening in the great silence for something which could be the far-off murmur of a motor, but there was nothing. "I am alive," he went on philosophically. "The boys up there," he made a sign with his head in the direction of the white crosses on the slope, "may be heroes. But they're dead."

GUNNAR D. KUMLIEN.

APPEALS

All observers report appalling conditions for millions of civilians in South Korea this winter. Contributions for food and medicines for homeless and starving refugees in Pusan and Seoul may be sent to War Relief Services, National Catholic Welfare Conference, 350 Fifth Ave., New York 1, N. Y. . . . Salesian priests and brothers in the famine-ridden areas of Madras, India, number over two hundred; they conduct schools and agricultural projects and distribute food. Contributions for famine relief in Madras may be sent to: Salesian Missions, 148 Main St., New Rochelle, N. Y.

There are over seventy thousand lepers in Catholic leprosaria throughout the world and many thousands more in the three hundred other leper colonies which have Catholic chaplains. A new drug, Sulfone DDS, which costs \$3 per patient per year, supplies most effective treatment. Contributions for the lepers may be sent to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 109 East 38th St., New York 16, N. Y., or to the Society's local diocesan offices.

New Men for New Times

THE other day I heard a labor leader telling a union convention that he thought Phil Murray and Bill Green died of broken hearts because of the Republican victory on Election Day. I doubt



it. Green was eighty-two, and neither he nor Murray was so unstable as to take the first Republican victory in the last twenty years quite so much to heart.

These two deaths, coming within two weeks of each other and three weeks of Election Day, do strike a man, however, as most uncommon evidence of the finger of God writing "finis" to one era of American life.

In 1924 John L. Lewis was president of the United Mine Workers, Philip Murray was vice-president, and William Green was secretary-treasurer. Among them they dominated the American labor movement for the next twenty-eight years. Today only John L. Lewis is left and he appears to be well insulated and isolated in a cocoon of independence apart from the major federations. The Age of the Miners is over.

Within one month the AFL, the CIO and the nation have lost their old leaders and acquired new ones. Everybody knows Dwight Eisenhower. But not so many know George Meany and Walter Reuther.

Meany deserves to be better known. He is an able, intelligent man with a forceful personality, who is not nearly as glum as his pictures would indicate. As secretary-treasurer of the AFL since 1939 he had to play second violin to Bill Green and therefore did not come much into the public eye. He is strictly a Federation man, by which I mean that he never represented a large or important international union. The son of a plumber, he went directly from business agent of a plumbers local in New York City to president of the central trades and labor council of that city and from there to president of the New York State Federation of Labor in 1934. Five years later, on the death of Frank Morrison, he moved up to AFL headquarters in Washington.

Meany has not been afraid to act on the subject of racketeering within the Federation. Just how dirty a mess he will be faced with on this front is now coming to light in the hearings before the New York Crime Commission on the subject of racketeering in the AFL longshoremen's union.

Meany leans strongly to the Democrats, and he had much to do with the AFL's precedent-smashing endorsement of Adlai Stevenson. But he proved he could make a quick and effective peace with the victor when President-elect Eisenhower, shortly after a conference with Meany, tapped Martin Durkin, another pro-Stevenson plumber and a Catholic, as his Secretary of Labor and thereby set off some beautiful caterwauling on the part of Senator Taft.

The new AFL president first showed the labor movement that he had what it takes when he tangled with John L. Lewis on the floor of the AFL convention in San Francisco over the question, "Should the officers of the AFL sign the non-Communist affidavits required by the Taft-Hartley Act?" Lewis was making a brief stopover in the AFL at that time.

Meany said they should. John L. Lewis said they shouldn't. All the reports are that Meany emerged from the tangle with more than a few of the hairs of John L.'s eyebrows firmly clutched in his meaty right fist.

Meany has been rather caustic in his references to Lewis since then. At the AFL convention in New York last September Meany said in reference to a telegram from Lewis urging a unity conference of all labor groups: "If John Lewis wants to get action on the subject of labor unity and feels that the Miners should come back, he is quite familiar with the process of returning to the AFL. He is also quite familiar with the process of leaving the AFL."

It is not likely that Lewis will do anything but wipe his feet on this kind of a welcome mat. But who can tell what the major Miner will do next? I for one could never believe that he would return to the AFL the first time.

Meany takes a very different tack toward the CIO. Bill Green had galled many of the CIO leaders with his periodic pleas pitched on a level of "come back home and ask your old father's forgiveness and all will be well."

Meany is shrewd enough to know that the CIO is never going to respond to that line. He has offered an olive branch to the CIO, but the arm is extended straight out rather than down. This is progress.

WHAT happens at the other end of the olive branch depends mainly on the personality of a very different man, Walter P. Reuther, the new president of the CIO.

Meany stepped sedately into the presidency of the AFL as the result of a unanimous vote of the executive council after a two-hour meeting. He was the obvious choice.

Reuther, on the other hand, made it the hard way, after two weeks of vigorous and often bitter in-fighting.

In the end he beat Allan Haywood, another ex-miner, by a convention vote of 3,079,181 to 2,613,103.

Meany is a forceful, but not a dramatic or colorful character. Reuther has lived, and nearly died, through enough dramas to keep a stable of ham actors steadily employed.

But there is little ham in Reuther. What he has got he has earned with his bright mind, his single-hearted devotion to whatever job he had, or wanted to have, in the ranks of labor, and a bit of luck.

Some people don't like him. They say he is too much given to Socialism, too little given to socializing. He doesn't smoke or drink with the boys. He works late and goes home to his wife and two daughters, gets a night's sleep and manages always to look, as somebody has said, "as though he has just stepped out of a cold shower."

"The dynamic redhead" is a phrase that keeps recurring in the news reports. They don't love him as they loved Phil Murray. But he has done everything that a man can do in the labor movement, including get shot at and nearly killed, and there are few men in the movement who do not respect him for his ability and his zeal.

Walter P. Reuther was born on the eve of Labor Day, 1907, in Wheeling, West Virginia, where his father was an organizer for the Brewery Workers, president of the Ohio Valley Trades and Labor Assembly, AFL, at twenty-three, and eventually a candidate for Senator on the Socialist ticket.

Valentine Reuther trained his four sons by making them debate each other every Sunday afternoon on some lively issue of the day. Walter usually won these arguments with an avalanche of words and facts.

At fifteen he quit school and went to work, winding up in Detroit four years later in one of the auto industry's most highly skilled crafts, that of tool and die maker. There followed work by day — at General Motors and Ford — and education by night, or vice versa, at high school and Wayne University. There also followed a three-year trip around the world, including sixteen months in a Russian auto factory.

In 1935 Walter returned to Detroit and set to work as an organizer for the young United Auto Workers. He built Local 174 from seventy-eight members to thirty thousand in one year. He led sit-down strikes. He helped negotiate the first General Motors contract. He became first vice-president and started his battle with the growing Communist faction in UAW, which eventually wound up with himself as president in 1946, a majority of Reutherites on the executive board in 1947 and the comrades, once on the verge of taking over our largest industrial union, reduced to one last stronghold in the big Ford local at River Rouge. In this fight he had the enthusiastic support of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists.

Reuther has pioneered in the field of collective bargaining with the escalator clause, the five-year contract, the slogan "wage increases without price increases."

In 1932 he was a Norman Thomas Socialist, but by 1940 he was supporting Roosevelt and by 1948 voting for Truman and dreaming of a third party of anti-Communist progressives. Since then the UAW has done so well inside the Democratic Party of Michigan that there is not much third-party talk lately.

MANY people worry about how much of the Socialism is left in Reuther. Writing in *Harper's* several years ago, James A. Wechsler, an old friend, said: "Reuther belongs to the school of thought which visualized an increasingly 'mixed' economy as the pattern of the American future . . . His program may mean nationalization in some areas (such as coal) where he feels that private enterprise long ago ceased to make economic sense. But Reuther's primary obsession is the desperate necessity for over-all planning rather than the application of a fixed rule."



Reuther

Reuther was strong in his support of Philip Murray's Industrial Council proposal, a scheme for overall planning whose ancestry Murray traced in a direct line from the papal encyclicals. However, there is no question that Reuther leans more to the centralized state than is consistent with the organized decentralization of the Popes.

I have been wrong before, but my guess is that Reuther will not be sympathetic toward real unity between the AFL and CIO for a few years yet. It would be something less than human for him to preside over the liquidation of his own job so soon after he had reached that eminence.

For the AFL has won the battle of numbers. At the end of World War II both organizations were close to six million members. The closing of the defense plants where the CIO was strong, and then the ousting of the Communist unions in 1949, together with steady growth by the AFL, has meant that the latter now stands at over eight million while the CIO at the present actually has about four million two hundred thousand members.

In a few years Reuther may have changed that picture. He has done so many extraordinary things before, one can believe that almost anything is possible. But whether he does or not, the odds are that in a few years "the dynamic redhead" will know what it's like to be the big frog in the smaller pond and will be

wondering if he shouldn't change his base of operations to the bigger pond.

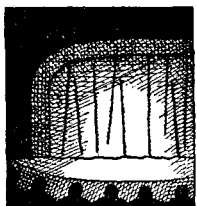
Unfortunately for him, the big pond already has a big frog: George Meany. What remains is the hope that both Reuther and Meany can look beyond the whole question of ponds and frogs and consider the really significant question, "What is best for the American worker?" And that too is possible because they are both good men.

JOHN C. CORT.

THE STAGE

I'VE GOT SIXPENCE

AN appalling week commenced with John van Druten's disastrous raid on the moral preserve. Mr. van Druten does not usually travel in such exalted paths; his proper field is rather a smaller one, set about by a trim and elegant hedge, and sprouting, among the weeds, most delicate flowers of comedy. In many corners of this garden, one hears the splash of water and the tinkle of cocktail glasses, but not in "I've Got Sixpence." What reverberates here is the lumbering tread of the Absolute, for Mr. van Druten has discovered God, and has lamentably made us privy to his meditations on this belated recognition.



I should begin, perhaps, by observing that, aesthetically, "I've Got Sixpence" does not exist; it is difficult to think of a more fatuous and actively irritating work. As symptom, however, it is of urgent and provocative interest. The clue to this curious anomaly would seem to reside in the nature of Mr. van Druten's talent. He is, of all contemporary dramatists, the one most classically equipped to play the role of Middlebrow. Between the worlds of imagination and commerce, he plies an earnest but uneasy traffic. Never quite able to accede to the demands of one, and resisting wholesale capitulation to the other, he attempts to unite them in common cause, and the end results, not surprisingly, are dreadful.

In "I've Got Sixpence," for instance, Mr. van Druten is "grappling" (as he has announced so repeatedly in the public press) with problems of the spirit, of literature, of money and of sex. To illustrate these preoccupations, he has furnished a small fable with all the fashionable modern paraphernalia: a disillusioned young writer who had joined the Communist party in rebellion against his family, and who has been left cynical and rootless by the collapse of that ideal; and a young woman also in revolt against the agnosticism of her father, but herself religiously unorthodox.

Around these two, Mr. van Druten has disposed several other characters: a conventional young woman, artfully trapping a suitor into marriage; the victim himself, an appallingly literal Catholic; a religious charlatan who talks most of the time about "the all-effulgent" and the "bathed in light," and the sentimental, generous widow who patronizes him.

What Mr. van Druten draws out of this curious mixture is, I suppose, what our paid moralists would call "a tremendous spiritual affirmation." It is, I assure you, neither tremendous, nor spiritual, nor an affirmation, but rather a willful distortion of experience which we must indignantly reject. One objects not to Mr. van Druten's exploration of this material, but to his exploitation of it. He makes such cozy little compromises with life; he will have *everything*. Sex and spirit, for example, or money and art are not irreconcilable, but the ease with which they have met and married in Mr. van Druten's mind renders the alliance a suspicious one. He can unravel the moral tangles with such slippery skill because they are not, honestly, very real to him.

Literature, for example, Mr. van Druten would seem to regard as the expression of any kind of sentiment, no matter how anarchic or undisciplined ("if that's the way you feel, *go right ahead and express yourself!*"). Politically, his hero is the kind of sloppy liberal who would make a prize exhibit in Senator McCarthy's traveling circus. Sex, of course, Mr. van Druten is earnestly *for*: his young people hastily adjourn to the nearest hotel precisely three hours after their first acquaintance.

But it is the something greater than ourselves which makes for righteousness that Mr. van Druten is really documenting. And it is here, I think, that he has made his shabbiest display. Between the varieties of religious experience embraced by his characters, Mr. van Druten is incapable of discrimination; the best or the worst—no matter: they are all raisins in the mystic tapioca which we might, I suppose, call "the perennial philosophy." Since every shade of belief appeared to disadvantage in this spectacle, no doubt we must regard only with amusement Mr. van Druten's pathetic caricature of Catholic dogma and practice.

Miss Viveca Lindfors is a stunning young woman and an excellent actress, whom I hope we may keep among us for a considerable time. Vicki Cummings and Patricia Collinge also brought remarkable distinction to their light sketches. In the singularly graceless role of the young writer, Edmond O'Brien "struggled" (at least, I believe that is the customary word) but went down manfully. No one, however, could survive for more than a brief space so prolonged an exposure of moral and imaginative desuetude as "I've Got Sixpence." Mr. van Druten may indeed have discovered God, but I rather think that God might have preferred to remain anonymous. (*At the Barrymore.*)

RICHARD HAYES.



Two Poems for Christmas

Christmas, 1951

(FOR THE CARMELITES)

ASHES of paper, ashes of a world
Wandering, when fire is done:
We argue with the drops of rain!

Until One comes Who walks unseen
Even in elements we have destroyed.
Deeper than any nerve
He enters flesh and bone.
Planting His truth, He puts our substance on.
Air, earth and rain
Rework the frame that fire has ruined.
What was dead is waiting for His Flame.
Sparks of His Gospel spend their seed and bide
To grow like irises, born before summertime.
These blue things bud in Israel.

The girl prays by the bare wall
Between the lamp and the chair.
(Framed with an angel in our galleries
She has a richer painted room, sometimes a crown.
Yet seven pillars of obscurity
Build her to Wisdom's house, and Ark, and Tower.
She is the secret of another Testament:
She owns their manna in her jar.)

Fifteen years old—
The flowers printed on her dress
Cease moving in the middle of her prayer
When God, Who sends the messenger,
Meets His messenger in her Heart.
Her answer, between breath and breath,
Wrings from her innocence our Sacrament!
In her white body God becomes our Bread.

It is her tenderness
Heats the dead world like David on his bed.
Times that were too soon criminal
And never wanted to be normal
Evade the beast that has pursued
You, me and Adam out of Eden's wood.
Suddenly we find ourselves assembled
Cured and recollected under those green trees!

Her prudence wrestled with the Dove
To hide us in His cloud of gold and silver:
These are the mysteries of her Son.
And here my heart, a purchased outlaw
Prays in her possession
Until her Jesus makes my mind
Bleed like a flower in her blameless hand.

THOMAS MERTON.

Et Incarnatus Est ...

KNEELING as upright as a smokeless flame,
Praying as surely as an arrow flies,
Lady, you incense heaven with God's name,
And angels take direction from your eyes.

Upon the simple pin-point of your thought
Gabriel dances to your wordless song
God's marriage masque, whose Word is caught
And cradled by your beckoning tongue.

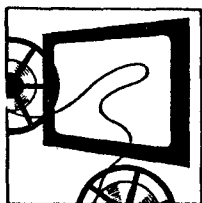
Grace us, hanging in a Judas wind
By ropes our wintering pride has spun,
Mary, whose pure conceit strikes blind
The chill eye of the gaunt March sun.

JOSEPH P. CLANCY.

THE SCREEN

YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN

THE smartest thing that Producer Hal Wallis did after deciding to make a movie out of William Inge's play "Come Back, Little Sheba" was to cast Shirley Booth in the role she created on the stage.



As Lola Delaney, Miss Booth portrays a lonely middle-aged woman so busy living in the past that she neglects her husband, her house and herself. Actually, Lola is full of good intentions, but she has too much time, and she wastes it in various ways, including

telling her neighbors about her husband's recovery from alcoholism, boring her husband with stories about her youth, and standing on the porch calling for little Sheba, her dog that had disappeared some time earlier.

As the film runs its course, it becomes clear that little Sheba is a symbol of the past—a past to which Lola clings desperately and which her husband, Doc Delaney, is trying hard to forget. The husband is well played by Burt Lancaster, who may be too young for the role but brings to it a convincing sensitivity and understanding.

Lola loves her husband, though she is aware that he

no longer loves her, and has stuck by him for twenty years. But Doc (the very name is ironical) realizes bitterly how little they have in common and how wasted his life has been. Perhaps Lola and Doc would have continued in this stalemate for the rest of their lives if a situation in their own house hadn't upset everything. Seeing their pretty college-student roomer (Terry Moore) falling for a well-built but empty-headed athlete (Richard Jaeckel), Doc thinks the girl is getting caught in the same trap that messed up his own life.

If Daniel Mann hadn't directed the screenplay by Ketti Frings so well, the movie of "Come Back, Little Sheba" would be more than one could take. As it is, Hal Wallis' realistic production, the stirring themes handled in an adult manner, the story's repeated plea for compassion and understanding of one's fellow man are designed only for strong audiences.

Shirley Booth's magnificent performance is something to make the Oscar dispensers sit up and take notice. From the picture's grim opening right through to its more hopeful finale ("I don't think little Sheba is coming back, Doc"), Miss Booth holds her audience spellbound.

I'M not sure that the ambiguous ending which Daphne du Maurier used in her novel works out well in the movie version of "My Cousin Rachel." In the theater you are greatly impressed by Nunnally Johnson's script and the suspense that Director Henry Koster builds up as young Philip Ashley falls under the spell of his cousin's widow. But afterward, as you mull over Rachel's innocence or guilt, you begin to wonder why, as long as the camera can show us some things that happen when Philip (who tells the story) isn't present, it doesn't show us even more and give us the complete dope on Rachel.

In the movie, "My Cousin Rachel" is a beautifully photographed, well-acted trick, a melodrama full of dark foreboding that may keep you on the edge of your chair but is only half satisfying as cinema.

Olivia de Havilland gives an excellent performance as the mysterious Rachel, half-Italian, half-English, who may have murdered her husband and may or may not have been playing cat and mouse with the young man who inherited his estate and was an easy prey for her elusive charm. And Richard Burton, a newcomer to American films, plays Philip with just the right combination of strength and weakness.

At times you may get a little impatient with the overly leisurely pace of Henry Koster's direction, but the 1830 costumes and sets of the production will hold your interest during the lag. Addicts of "Jane Eyre" and "Wuthering Heights" school of movies will find "Rachel" right up their heath.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

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OF NOTE

THE PRIMACY OF CONTEMPLATION

THE Walter Farrell Memorial Volume of *The Thomist*, "From an Abundant Spring" (P. J. Kenedy. \$7.50.), contains an essay by Gerald Vann, O. P., on "The Problem of the Catholic Novelist:" The following is an excerpt:

We tend . . . to think of love as possessing, of life as mastering and dominating, of knowledge in terms of power, of holiness as heroic action. Superficially, no doubt, we are right; but fundamentally we are wrong, and tragically wrong. These things are true only against a background of their opposites. Holiness is essentially not action but passion: the experiencing of divine things. Life means being open to reality; knowledge becomes wisdom only when it means being possessed by the truth. Activity, of course, in all these cases follows; but it is the expression, the fruit, of the preliminary receptivity.

But today in our activist society things are very different. The frenetic tempo of life, the multiplicity of interests, material and relatively superficial, which crowd in upon us, the noise, the confusion, the chaos, the restlessness—all these things can easily rob us of our power to live at the deeper levels, can rob us of our vision. We live more and more exclusively on the purely utilitarian, practico-rational level; and the other functions of the psyche are atrophied or lost. We lose our ability to become wise because we lose our vision; and we lose our vision because we lose the faculty of wonder: that capacity which is given us by poetry and philosophy, by love and religion, to marvel at things, at the mystery of being, and, in Heraclitus' phrase, to "listen to the essence of things." And with the loss of the capacity goes the loss of any conception of its value, its supreme importance.

You find this trend markedly in the sphere of education, where the accent is put more and more exclusively on knowledge of facts, and especially of material facts, and above all of commercially rewarding facts. "What is the use of learning Latin and Greek? of poetry and art and music? of philosophy?" *Ut quid perditio haec*: wherefore this waste? So Judas asked, as he watched the woman pouring out the precious ointment on the feet of God. Wherefore this waste? stupid parents of children of genius have asked through the ages: why not give up this senseless scribbling of poems, this strumming of music, and find a good steady job? And, wherefore this waste? more and more

people are asking today in education: why not give up these useless things, and do something practical? And if this view were ever to prevail universally it would mean that the world would have lost almost everything that makes life worth living. The greatest and most urgent task which confronts education today is precisely to instill ineradicably into men's minds the utility of the useless, the value of these things which produce no cash returns but which "make the soul worth saving."

The correlative of the sense of wonder is the mystery that lies at the heart of everything. And inevitably life loses its meaning when it loses its mystery. Take the mystery out of love and it ceases to be love and becomes a biochemical equation; take the mystery out of art and it becomes the mindless daubs you see in magazines and on billboards; take the mystery out of the blade of grass, the leaf, the petal of the flower, and you might as well be blind for you will never see the secret heart of things, you might as well be deaf for you will never hear the song of the spheres.

But the world of today is so shadowed by political fears and troubles and by economic anxieties and stresses that they tend to blind us to the deeper psychological crises through which mankind is passing. And perhaps the greatest of those crises can be expressed by saying that, generally speaking, the human psyche is forgetting how to be feminine to reality. Gender is a much wider concept than sex: whether human beings are male or female, the essential lesson to be learnt is that they must be feminine before they can attempt with success to be masculine: they must be contemplative before they can hope with success to be active; they must receive and assimilate reality before attempting to give it out again.

The artists, of course, know this, the poets and painters and sculptors and musicians: the beauty they create is a beauty they have first received. The wise men (as opposed to the clever men) know it: the wisdom they give forth is something they have first absorbed into themselves. The saints know it: the holiness which is expressed in terms of power, of miracle and so on, is not their creation but simply the effect of the presence of God within them, a presence to whose full entry they have at long last been able to remove all obstacles. But the knowledge of these men is, alas, not common knowledge today; their attitude to reality is not the common attitude. When Plato wrote of the philosopher-king he was writing of an ideal which our modern technological society has rejected: the idea that power should be in the hands of the wise, that action should be the expression of contemplation, of vision.

Spiritual Vagrants Seeking a Night's Lodging

REPORT ON THE AMERICAN COMMUNIST. By Morris L. Ernst and David Loth. Henry Holt. \$3.

By WILL HERBERG

ON the basis of some three hundred autobiographical accounts supplied by former Communists, mostly rank and filers, as well as a number of more intensive interviews, Morris Ernst and David Loth attempt in this book to present a picture of the American Communist and to suggest ways of dealing with the problem that Communism presents to American democracy. In neither task are they more than moderately successful, because on neither level do they probe deep enough to get beneath the surface.

The American Communist, they find, is rather young ("the peak age appears to be 18 to 23"); he comes not from the working class but from a comfortable middle-class urban home, has had a much better than average education, and has held positions of clerical, professional, or intellectual character, rarely those requiring manual labor. His family background is marked by an "extremely high incidence of suicides, desertions, and divorces among the parents, brothers, and sisters, or other close relatives." He joined the Communist movement for a variety of reasons, among which financial gain was "almost never a factor"; nor can "bad company, poverty, and Communist literature" be held responsible; by and large, he seems to have been moved by an urge to self-validation — an urge to "be somebody," to "belong" — subtly compounded with idealism and the thirst for power.

Once in, he does not stay long; aside from the hard core of "old timers" who form the party apparatus, the party life of a member is somewhere around two years: the annual turnover is from one-third to one-half the total membership. As a rank and filer, he is likely to be native born, though among the leadership the foreign-born element is prominent. Motives for leaving the party are as many and as com-

plex as motives for joining; disconcerting twists of "party line" often combine with personal factors, such as emotional maturation or an abrupt change in love relationships, to bring about the break.

After leaving the party, the former Communist generally has a difficult time finding his place in society, partly because of his own maladjustment and partly because of the strong prejudice against him; indeed, the authors contend that it is this "fear of loneliness and isolation" that keeps so many disillusioned Communists from leaving the party sooner than they do. Overwhelmingly, the *ex*-Communist — of whom there must have been some seven hundred thousand in the past thirty years in this country — is a bitter and uncompromising *anti*-Communist and is eager to do his share in the fight against Communism.

All this seems fairly true, though it is not particularly novel. But where the authors try to go further and establish a certain personality structure "common to all or most Communists," the results are not too happy, largely because the method they employ is inadequate and the conclusions are arbitrary, vague, and uncontrolled. Most of the personality traits attributed to Communists — "a sense of personal inadequacy . . . a lack of both humor and optimism . . . submissive people who want to be told what to do and what to think . . . dominating father, overpowering mother . . . casual, rather random sex life" — even if true, could quite as easily be attributed to large segments of the American people utterly remote from Communism. I do not think that such "quickie" constructions are of much use.

But my major criticism is directed against the implications and conclusions the authors draw from their study. Because "psychological" factors enter so largely into the making of Communists, "these same factors," the authors contend, "must be used decisively in combating

them." They do not see how impossible it is to isolate "psychological" factors from the total life-situation, and especially from the social and historical factors that mold it. This leads them to try to construct a kind of timeless "Communist type," the same in the 1950's as in the 1920's ("despite the twistings and turnings of the party line, Communism has always appealed to the same kind of people"), an enterprise which, it seems to me, clearly flies in the face of the most obvious facts.

When they get to the more practical aspects of dealing with the Communist movement, the authors are badly hampered by confused "liberal" attitudes from which apparently they have not been able to free themselves. They rightly deplore the suspicion in which *ex*-Communists are held by certain sections of the public, and commend the Catholic Church as well as some labor unions (the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, particularly) for a much more realistic and humane approach which "welcomes the former Communist, helps him overcome (his) loneliness, . . . steers him into a job if he needs one." This praise is well deserved, but the authors do not seem to realize that the Church and the labor unions deal in this way only with the *truly repentant ex*-Communist — that is, with the *ex*-Communist who makes a clean and open break with the party and is ready to be at least as active in the fight *against* Communism as formerly he was in his pro-Communist activities. The *ex*-Communist who is not willing to make this kind of fight can hardly expect to have his professions of repentance taken seriously. This the authors do not seem to understand. Nor do they understand the really strategic role which the authentic *ex*-Communist can play in the world struggle against Soviet totalitarianism.

The chief defect of the book, however, is its failure to probe deeply enough — to focus the prob-

lem, a problem of ultimate allegiance. Here and there, the authors venture a few random comments on the religious aspects of joining and leaving the Communist movement — they even quote one of their informants who sees the break with Communism as “always primarily a *crisis of faith*” — but they do not know what to make of this insight. Communism must be approached and dealt with on many levels, in both short- and long-range terms, but it is in the context of man’s religious need that Communism as the “god that failed” is ultimately to be understood. There is very little of such understanding in this book.

Tomorrow?

LIMBO. By Bernard Wolfe. Random House. \$3.50.

By GEOFFREY ASHE

HOW can one describe this novel? It is — to put the matter briefly — a huge satiric Utopia, sketching the possible results of cybernetics, the managerial revolution, and various other current phenomena. Yet the author sees fit to insist that it isn’t a Utopia, even an upside-down one. He speaks of it instead as a purely fanciful attempt to work out the implications of our mid-century world. Well, all right. But I don’t know what else to call it.

Written in a peculiar Joyce-ish style, *Limbo* tells the story of Dr. Martine, a brain specialist who flees from the Third World War (1972) to an island in the Indian Ocean. He spends eighteen years among the natives trying to produce peaceable humans by lobotomy.

For the first part of this period the war still rages. Two ogre-like electronic calculators control the armies. But the calculators are finally sabotaged and the war brought to a halt, leaving a devastated world. The surviving powers are a much curtailed U. S. A. and a vaguely Marxist Eurasian Union. Both states are technological marvels — as far as they go.

Pacifism is now the norm. An adroit demagogue, formerly Martine’s friend, exploits a hint in the doctor’s abandoned notebook. It is argued that human arms and legs (those dynamic appendages) have made Man the aggressively-minded creature he is. Therefore, voluntary amputation will make him a pacifist for good. The idea catches on; the best men among the living rush to the surgeons. When Martine returns from his island, he finds society governed by subtly dehumanized amputees. Most of them, by acquiring false limbs of amazing prowess, have turned into demi-robots. But some extremists are mere mystical torsos. (The torsos are the political opposition.)

Martine tells his false disciples that the notebook has been misconstrued. The situation, however, is beyond his control. He decides that masochism is the curse of the modern age, and that the limb-lopping program is simply a masochist *tour de force*, the rationalization to end all rationalizations. That is roughly

what it does. The reign of non-violence turns out to be a sham. At the end of the book World War IV has begun.

This is a feeble outline of a staggering creation. Perhaps it may convey something further to add that Mr. Wolfe’s novel actually has a bibliography. And it stands squarely in the line of a great tradition. There are links with most of the important Utopias in the English language — More’s and Bacon’s, *Erewhon* and *Erewhon Revisited*, *The Sleeper Awakes*, *Last and First Men*, *Brave New World*. Yes, and even *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*. Some of the last reflections are quite Chestertonian. But, for sheer scope, the thing beats all comers.

I don’t claim that Mr. Wolfe has really outdone his predecessors. The competition is obviously stiff; and he juggles such a swarm of ideas that he tends to baffle. What is certain is that he has written something exciting and opulent and grandiosely comic. *Limbo* is one of the few that are truly memorable.

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Guy Fawkes Reappraised

THE GUNPOWDER PLOT. By Hugh Ross Williamson. Macmillan. \$4.50.

By G. B. HARRISON

THE Gunpowder Treason of 1605 was the worst single disaster for the Catholic cause in England. According to the official story, repeated in English school history books generation after generation, a small band of desperate Catholics directly instigated by Jesuit priests, if not by the Vatican itself, plotted to blow up the Houses of Parliament during the state opening by King James I; thereby the whole executive would have been destroyed in one crash. But one of the conspirators, wishing to save Lord Mounteagle, a Catholic nobleman, caused a mysterious letter to be sent which Mounteagle loyally took to Cecil, who handed it to James, who very sagaciously smelt gunpowder.

A search was made the night before the fatal meeting and Guy Fawkes was discovered waiting for the decisive hour. To this day small boys in England discharge fireworks and light bonfires on November 5th in thankful memory that the popish plot was so wonderfully thwarted. The story has often been told, but there have been writers who questioned whether the whole affair was not a piece of sinister government propaganda.

Mr. Williamson in *The Gunpowder Plot* has gone back to the original sources, which are enormous; his presentation is scholarly, his writing lively, and his book very timely. The story, as he tells it, is strangely similar to certain other plots in our own days when the enemies of the Church are again staging trials where the accused are condemned on confessions extracted by torture and in the absence of essential witnesses who die conveniently from natural causes.

Mr. Williamson has not indeed discovered any new document—it would be strange if Cecil and his experts had overlooked anything important—but the old facts, as he stresses their significance, reveal some sinister probabilities: Lord

Mounteagle, on the coming of James to England, had privately renounced his faith and attached himself to Cecil. He was trusted by the plotters and knew from the first every detail of the plot which he passed to Cecil. He probably provoked and encouraged the plotters to proceed, and may even have arranged for the gunpowder to be “conveyed” to them from the government stores in the Tower. The famous letter was a fake, intended solely to enrage the gullible James, who was never in any danger, for Cecil knew everything but waited until he could strike with most dramatic effect, and that moment was perfectly timed. The Jesuits were entirely innocent; when they learned of the plot in confession they did all they could to suppress it; any evidence to the contrary produced at the trial was either forced by torture or forged. Such are the inferences to be drawn from Mr. Williamson’s narrative.

The Powder Plot was thus the last and most sensational of the attempts to eradicate the Catholic Faith from England; thereafter any measures of repression could be publicly justified. The time is now perhaps ripe for someone to tell the full story of the “Elizabethan Settlement” of the Anglican Church.

The Distaff Side

WOMAN TODAY. By John Fitzsimons. Sheed and Ward. \$2.50.

By DORIS GRUMBACH

FATHER Fitzsimons, a young English chaplain to the girls’ division of the Young Christian Workers of England, has written this small and troubled book about a problem intrinsic to our industrial times — the changed status of women. From the secure economy of home life in the nineteenth century until today, they have left in droves to work in England’s factories and shops, and with their exodus came all the dislocations of spirit and body and emotional makeup from which

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so many modern women suffer.

Father Fitzsimons uses quotation, survey, hearsay and rather dubiously-grounded convictions to describe the universal feminine characteristics ("While man in his search for truth is in danger of making his religion an abstract thing, woman in her desire for peace and her use of the affections runs the risk of treating God as somebody to be flattered and cajoled . . .," and "A woman, even more than a man, cannot stand alone, nor achieve anything alone," and in his concluding paragraphs: ". . . woman is by temperament more religious than man . . .").

These too-facile generalizations and many more like them subtract from the force of Father Fitzsimons' argument, but they do not obscure the basic truth he propounds: women have lost the position they held through centuries as keeper of the home, and gained nothing by their abdication but dubious monetary advantages.

Father Fitzsimons sees woman's homemaker role as fittingly keyed to her physiology and emotional com-

position. Militant feminism in the nineteenth century, the resultant unreasoning demand for education for women parallel to men's, and a hungry industrialism brought women out into the working world. At the same time modern economy reduced radically the number of things that still needed to be done in the home—the mail-order catalog replaced the spinning wheel on the hearth. She lost her security that was so closely bound to her role of wife and mother, and her training and ability for these roles, and then, to some extent, her desire to assume them.

Part of the solution Father Fitzsimons offers is a dichotomizing of education, revising women's curricula to fit her more properly for her primary historic role. The economic necessities that in many cases drove her initially into the market-place are not too sympathetically viewed: he feels that more often than not the motivating spirit was not need but vanity or boredom.

The book ends with a "Theology of Woman" in which the pressing realities of woman's modern anomal-

ism disappear in what seems almost to be a deceptive romantic haze, like the all-dissolving fadeout of a movie. The Modern Eve into the renunciatory Mother—an ideal that Father Fitzsimons' body of facts and figures makes appealingly ideal but, unhappily, *in nubibus*.

Politico

THE LIFE OF SARMIENTO. By Alison Williams Bunkley. Princeton University Press. \$7.50.

By CHARLES G. FENWICK

THE story of a nation is often best told in the lives of its leading citizens. Too often, however, in Latin America it is the military leader, the "man or horseback" who, combining a dominant personality with an ability to organize, comes forward to put an end to abuses and substitute his iron will for the slower and less reliable processes of the law. Sarmiento was an exception, the "schoolmaster president," who a hundred years ago set himself

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Taken as a whole, *The Life of Sarmiento* is a brilliant piece of work, drawn from original sources and citing freely the opinions of Latin American writers whose researches and studies make up a bibliography of some twenty-five pages. No better picture could be given of the political forces at work in Latin America of a hundred years ago, contrasting in a most interesting way with the Jacksonian period in our own country.

In the Christmas Book number, under Father Kennedy's list of choice books for 1952, "The Letters of St. Teresa of Jesus," was erroneously listed as a Bruce book. The publisher is the Newman Press of Westminster, Maryland.

REVIEWERS

Will Herberg is the author of "Judaism and Modern Man."

G. B. Harrison is the British Shakespearean scholar, now lecturing at the University of Michigan.

Doris Grumbach has written for several Catholic periodicals and was at one time a member of the *Time* staff.

Geoffrey Ashe is a British literary critic and political writer who is at present living in Canada.

Charles G. Fenwick is director of the department of Law and Organization of the Pan American Union.

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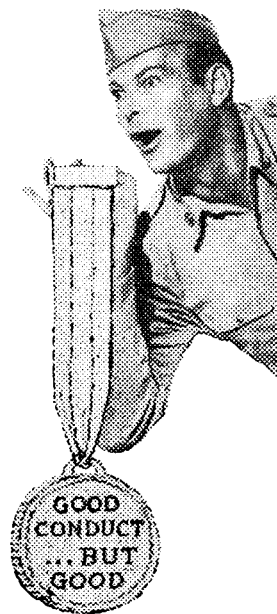
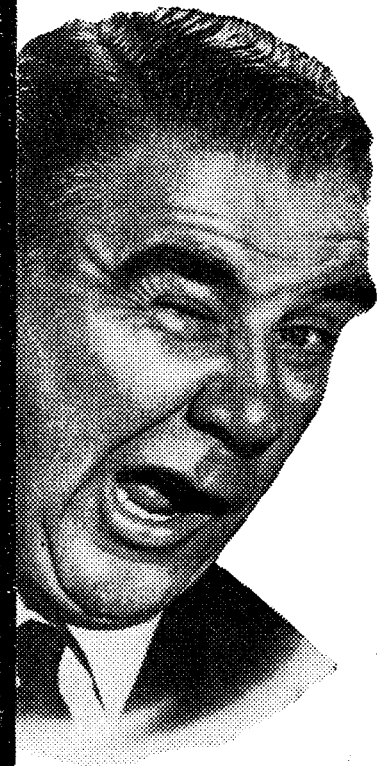
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